

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission

DATE, TIME AND

PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, November 7, 2001, 8:00 a.m., Room 106, City-County Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS AND OTHERS

IN ATTENDANCE:

Members: VJ Nelson, David Hunter, Tom Laging, Jeff Searcy, and Kim Todd

Others: Susan Kirkpatrick (Office Interiors Design); Jerry Shorney, Mark Canney, Steve Schwab, and Lynn Johnson (Parks & Recreations); Ken Fougeron (State Building Division); Bob Ripley (Commission Staff); David Unick (UNL); Ed Zimmer and Missy Minner (Planning Dept.); Helen Boosalis, and Glenda Peterson

STATED PURPOSE

OF THE MEETING: Regular Meeting of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission

Searcy called the meeting to order. The minutes of the September 26, 2001 minutes were approved as distributed.

Application by Susan Kirkpatrick on behalf of Keating O’Gara law firm, for a Certificate of Appropriateness for work on 530 S 13th Street in the Capitol Environs District -

Susan Kirkpatrick indicated that this project is part of the renovation of the Keating O’Gara building. They would like to add windows to the building along Lincoln Mall and on the north side which faces their parking. The windows will be the same as those on the west side of the building. The south door will not be replaced, however the trim will be replaced with bronze trim.

Hunter moved approval, seconded by Todd. Motion for approval carried 4-0; Nelson, Hunter, Searcy, and Todd voting ‘yes’; Laging abstaining; Kilgarin and O’Donnell absent.

Design concepts by Parks & Recreation Department, requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for work on the public right-of-way of Lincoln Mall, between 10th & 14th Streets -

Johnson reviewed the design and current condition of Lincoln Mall, Major design elements include single rows of large red oaks on either side, framing the outer edge of the Mall. To the north the row is in the turf area between the sidewalk and the curb, on the south the row in a turf area to the outer side of the sidewalk.

The center medians are planted with turf and small, ornamental red jade crabs. Other elements include ornamental streetlights between the oak trees and the curb, three bus stop locations (northwest corner at 11th, midblock on south side between 12th & 13th, and southwest corner of 14th), and a few wood-slat benches surrounded by yew shrubs. There are locations where red oaks are either missing or declining. The benches are deteriorated and the yews are screen them from observation from the street.

The first question is whether red oaks are envisioned, long-term, as the tree that frames the Mall. Parks recommends that red oaks continue to be the tree of the Mall and that missing or declining trees be replaced

with trees of 2 - 2.5" caliper as needed. Todd agreed that 2.5" would be appropriate.

Commissioners discussed the importance of encompassing the entire Mall including the two end faces in this project.

Johnson indicated that the selection of new benches and trash receptacles would be coordinated with what is being done by Clark Enerson at the NebCo building. He added that low plantings should be included around the benches to give a protected feeling, but without the sight obstructions of the current yews. Laging suggested the Commission adopt a standard for street furniture. Johnson stated that Parks would bring some alternatives to the Commission for consideration. Todd suggested they use the Dumor catalog. Zimmer added that he would contact StarTran to see if they need all three of the bus shelters in this area.

Johnson mentioned that the intersection treatments along the Mall are inconsistent. This is an opportunity to decide if the intersections should be treated the same. Ripley stated that they should not use curb-grinding. Someone should be paid to cut the curb and lay it in. Commissioners added that the sidewalks should be replaced and the condition of the curbs and storm drains should also be looked at. The conditions at the corners should be detailed.

Johnson stated that during the summer the canopies of the crabapple trees are a solid mass. In the fall, they are individual specimens. A decision should be made as to the design intent during the growing season. The installation of an irrigation system and upgrade of the turf is needed with all three options. Option A is to leave the trees as they are. Option B is the removal of about 1/3 of the trees and use the open pockets for flowering shrubs. Option C is to remove 1/2 existing trees so they would read more as individual specimens with turf and flowering planting.

Hunter asked if there is a better way to trim or prune the trees that would correct them. Todd stated that when left alone red jade crabs for layers of "weeping" branches. To control the height of these trees on the center median and keep the Capitol vista open, the red jade crabs on Lincoln Mall have been trimmed to a single layer. Schwab added that with corrective pruning it would take three or four years to correct them. Commissioners agreed that maintenance needs to be considered with all the improvements on the Mall. Todd suggested that the pruning has been done in this manner to keep them at their existing height. Otherwise they can get to be 20' tall. She doesn't feel that additional color is necessarily good. A "quiet mall" is okay.

Glenda Peterson stated that she was a reporter at the time the Mall was designed. She came to address the discussion about whether or not Larry Enerson was the designer of the Mall. She reported that Enerson took credit for the planting. Helen Boosalis added that he was a key figure. Peterson asked that the City keep the existing trees whether that plan is appealing to everyone or not. Lincoln is in a tight economic time. There is no money designated for street trees in Lincoln this spring. She thinks that adding to the planting would bring about the necessary improvement. Todd pointed out that none of the plans talk about the removal of all the red jades. This is not an appropriate location for a lot of planting. From a design and long term maintenance stand point, shrub masses and color are not desired on the corners. Laging was of the opinion that the trees should read as a mass. The money should be spent on the activity areas.

Ripley stated that the installation of landscaping is a relatively small cost, it is the long term maintenance that is the real issue in terms of cost. Hunter believes that the property owners on the Mall are willing to

create a maintenance district. He would like to be able to consider a proposal that has color and requires maintenance to see if it is possible to get the necessary support for the maintenance district. He sees the maintenance district being similar to a homeowners association that has one maintenance contract for the entire area.

Todd urged that the design of the Mall must include consideration of long term maintenance. Balancing the sustainability of the Mall with its design is crucial. Landscaping will make the most notable difference on the Mall. The Commission needs to have a stronger say in what goes in.

Searcy closed the public hearing and asked Parks and Recreation to prepare some options the Commission's consideration that include the items mentioned in the discussion. Discussion and action on this item will be held at the next Commission meeting.

Design concepts for Centennial Mall, presented by Tom Laging, for work in the public right-of-way from K Street to R Street -

Laging explained this is a downscaled version of the original concept. Rather than closing all blocks of the Mall to vehicles, it will remain open between M and P Streets, although the landscaping of those areas will be enhanced. He envisions the middle blocks evolving as a City project at a cost of approximately \$1 million per block. The other blocks would start out as simple walkways with double rows of columnar trees and grass. The second phase would be the University end. That portion would also seek the Children's Museum backing. The third phase would be the southern pair of blocks and is seen as a State responsibility. The memorial block is between K and L and could be further enhanced as a fourth phase. It would have memorial walls along the periphery with a memorial fountain at the center. There would be a total of 3 water features which would be similar to each other.

He would like the Commission give a recommendation on the design so that it can be taken to the joint meeting of the Capitol Commission and Environs Commission. Zimmer added that the joint meeting has tentatively been scheduled for December 20. The Mayor doesn't feel the upcoming Legislative session is a great moment to request support, however he feels it is important to have a Lincoln project there in case funding becomes possible.

The possibility of including sculptures was discussed. Laging indicated that was not received warmly at the workshop. Hunter stated that he is well connected to the Lundeen brothers and is willing to solicit them for an art donation.

Searcy moved that Commissioners contact Laging to view the preliminary design and submit their reflections to Zimmer prior to the December 20 meeting. The preliminary design will be reviewed at the December 20th meeting. Motion seconded by Nelson. Motion carried 4-0; Nelson, Hunter, Laging, and Searcy voting 'yes'; Todd, Kilgarin, and O'Donnell absent.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:38 am.